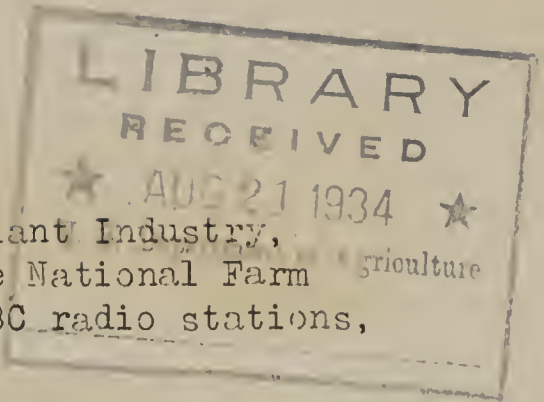


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THE GARDEN CALENDAR



A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 50 associate NBC radio stations, Tuesday, July 31, 1934.

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Hello folks. My little garden calendar chat today is about saving seeds in our own little flower and vegetable gardens. I think that on the whole it will pay us to purchase most of our flower and vegetable seeds because the seed growers are constantly improving the quality of their product. On the other hand we sometimes have something that is especially fine in our gardens and it will pay us to save our own seed supply. I knew a case of a lady who selected seed lima beans year after year until she had a strain or selection of one of the well known varieties that was much better than anything she could get in the seed stores. It is comparatively easy to save seeds of certain crops when you know how.

Take tomatoes for example. Every year I follow the practice of selecting a dozen or so as near perfect tomatoes as I can find on my best plants and of saving seed from them. These new varieties like Pritchard and Marglobe have comparatively few seeds but a dozen fruits will give me all of the seed that I need for planting the following year. I let the tomatoes get fairly ripe before picking them then after they are gathered I let them stand a day or two to ripen a little more. In removing the seeds I cut each tomato crosswise through the middle and squeeze the seeds and the pulp that surrounds them into a small stoneware jar or a glass fruit jar. I don't add any water but let the seeds stand uncovered for 24 to 36 hours in their own juice to slightly ferment. It has been found that this fermenting in their own juice will largely control a disease that is often carried over on the seeds. When the juice shows evidences of fermentation or souring I fill the jar with clean, cold water and the pulp rises to the top and is poured off. Then I wash the seeds through several changes of water until finally all of the pulp and tomato juice has been washed away and the clean seeds settle to the bottom of the jar. Next I pour the seeds upon a piece of cheesecloth or thin muslin and spread them to dry in a shady place but where they will get plenty of air circulation so that they will dry quickly. If the weather is rainy I dry the seeds over the stove but am careful that they do not become hot. When the seeds are thoroughly dried I place them in an envelope or small cotton bag and label them with the name of the variety and the date of saving. Melon seeds can be saved the same way.

Beans and peas should be allowed to ripen on the vines but should always be gathered before they become damaged by the weather. On a small scale it is best to pick the ripened pods and then spread them on a screen or sheet to dry thoroughly before shelling. When I have beans or peas to shell I place them in a cotton feed bag and beat the bag with a light stick until the pods are all broken then I use nature's fanning mill for cleaning them. By nature's fanning mill I mean the wind and I select a time when the

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wind is blowing fairly strong then I spread a sheet or large piece of paper on the ground then pour the seeds from a point as high as I can reach. As they fall to the sheet the wind blows the dust and light pieces of the pods to one side and by repeating the operation several times I get rid of all the chaff.

No time should be lost in treating beans and peas to stop the work of the bean weevil. This applies especially in the southern part of the country where the weevil that bores holes in the beans is especially troublesome. The usual treatment is to place the beans or peas in cotton bags and inclose them in an ash can, a lard can or a tight keg or barrel with a lid that can be closed tightly. Then you go to the drug store and get a small can of carbon disulphide which is a heavy vile smelling liquid that is about as inflamable and explosive as gasolene if it gets anywhere near the fire. Place a saucer or plate on top of the seeds then pour a part of the contents of the can of carbon disulphide into the saucer or plate and close up tight. The liquid quickly volatilizes, forming a heavy gas that settles to the bottom of the can but will get all through the seeds and smother the weevils. Leave the seeds in the can for two or three days then give them a little air.

I will not have time to mention the methods of gathering many seeds but I want to give you a few little kinks about how to do the work. For example certain seeds like pansies and balsams have the habit of bursting their seed pods and scattering their seeds, so must be gathered before they reach the bursting stage. A good way to gather seeds of this character and those that have wings and fly is to take a rather large paper bag such as you get from the grocery then take your scissors and clip the seedheads directly into the bag. If the seeds are not quite ripened you can leave the bags open but store them in a rather dark but well ventilated place until the seeds ripen. This is the proper way to save not only the seeds of garden herbs but the parts of the herbs that are to be dried for use. The seeds of Dill, Taragon, Thyme, Anise and a number of others can be handled this way.

In my boyhood days we used to gather the choice ears of sweet corn after they had ripened on the stalk, turn back the husks, and tie them together in bunches and hang them to the rafters in the granery or wagon shed to dry. As cold weather approached we took them into the house and kept them where they would be dry. The storage of the seeds is important and heat and moisture in combination are the enemies of good seeds. The kitchen is not a good place to store seeds on account of the heat and steam from the cooking. Nor is the cellar a good place on account of the moisture. All things considered a second floor bedroom or a bedroom closet is a good place to store seeds. If by any chance you are troubled with mice at your house better store the seeds in a tin box or can having a tight fitting lid, but punch a few small holes in the tin to give the seeds a little ventilation.

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